I'm Sorry by BroadwayItBitch

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Isadora's birthday party brings an unexpected guest, which causes Max to confront her past.

I'm Sorry

Isadora's first birthday party was today. It was a cool autumn day, perfect for a party. Max and El had invited close friends and family. One by one, everyone starts piling into their venue, a local park that Max had visited while she was pregnant.

Everything was decorated with pink streamers, white and pink balloons, and a little photo gallery of Isadora, her parents, the Party, Nancy, Jonathan, Hopper and Joyce.

Max was setting out some plates when she hears a car pull up. It was Hopper and Joyce coming up with their gift and a plate of cookies.

"Hopper, Joyce! I'm glad you could make it!" Max says, giving them both a hug.

"Where's El?" Hopper asks.

"I dunno. She said that she'd be back. Wherever she is," Max sighs, taking the gift and the cookies and setting them on their respective tables.

"Yo, Max! You gotta come see this!" Nancy calls from the women's bathroom.

"I'm coming!" Max called back. "Uh, Hop, could you maybe wait

until dinner time to eat?"

"... Sorry," Hopper says, setting the piece of pizza down.

Max walks to the women's bathroom, finding Nancy, Jonathan, and the rest of the Party there.

"What's all the fuss?" Max asks.

"Oh, nothing..." Will trails off, "Just the fact that we dressed up the most beautiful baby girl in the world!" Lucas holds up Isadora.

Isadora is wearing a pink dress with a tulle skirt with a sparkly gold top, along with a little gold ribbon on her head.

"Oh, look at you! Aw, so sweet!" Max says, taking Isadora from Lucas. "Were you planning this?"

"Guilty," Dustin says, raising his hand, "My idea."

"She's so cute," Max has another thing on her mind "Have you seen El?"

"No, sorry," Jonathan says.

“Take Izzy for me? I’m gonna call her,” Max says.

“I’ve got her,” Mike replies, and Max hands Isadora to him.

“I’ll be right back.”

Max walks over to the payphone, putting in a quarter and dialing El’s number.

It starts ringing… ringing.

“Hello, El Mayfield-Hopper speaking.”

“El! It’s Max. I was just wondering where you are?”

“I’m sorry, I’m getting the cake right now and I need to pick up Steve because his car broke down. I promise, I’ll be back soon,” El says.

“Okay, see you later, bye.”

“Buh-bye, baby.”

Max hangs up the phone and goes to the eating area, where everyone is admiring Isadora.

“El will be here soon. She just needs to pick up the cake and Steve.”

“What’s up with Steve?” Dustin asks.

“Car broke down. Shouldn’t worry, though,” Max shrugs.

It’s only another fifteen minutes when El and Steve get to the park. El is carrying the cake boxes while Steve walks up next to her.

“You sure you don’t need help?” Steve questions.

“Touch the boxes, and you’ll be in the woods over there. Don’t worry, I’ve got it,” El laughs, setting the boxes on the picnic table.

“I hate my car.”

“Then get a new one!” Jonathan laughs. Steve get a look at Isadora and his face lights up.

“Oh, the little one looks like a princess, look at her!” Steve exclaims.

“I know, right?” Lucas says.

“Can we freaking eat now?” Dustin asks.

As they serve the pizza, Dustin eats four slices at once. Everyone else just gets two. Everyone laughs when Dustin tries to sing some song from Phantom of the Opera and failing miserably. When it comes time to blow out the candles, Isadora takes a piece of cake in her little fist.

When the cake is served, Max hears the sound of a car door opening. She turns around to see a blue Camaro Z28. The person who comes out is someone she didn’t think she’d ever see again.

Billy.

Max pulls Steve to the side.

“Hey, what’s up?”

“It’s… it’s Billy. He’s here,” Max says.

“Do you want me to-”

“No, I need to do this on my own,” Max pauses, “Keep an eye on Izzy,

okay?"

"Of course, we're right here if you need anything," Steve replies.

As Max walks over to Billy, she notices some major changes to him. His mullet was gone, his wardrobe looks more mature than it did, and he looks more clean cut.

"Billy. I'll be damned."

"Hi, Max," Billy smiles.

"It's been what? Maybe… twelve years?"

"Yeah."

"Why… why are you here?" Max asks after a moment of silence.

"I came to see my niece turn a year old," Billy says, holding out a gift bag.

"After what happened with Steve and Lucas back in Hawkins? No. You're not seeing my daughter," Max counters.

“What?”

“There’s no way you’re seeing Isadora.”

Max crosses her arms, telling him to leave.

“Alright. I just… here,” Billy hands her the bag. “I hope things will be okay for you guys.”

He said it so genuinely, she can’t believe it. As Billy got in his car and drove away, Max walked back to the tables.

“What the hell did he want?” Nancy asks.

“He came to wish Izzy a happy birthday. And he got her a present,” Max breathes.

“How’d he know where to find us?” Will questions.

Joyce and Hopper shift in their seats.

“Mom, Dad, what have you done?” Jonathan asks.

“Before you blame me, blame your mother,” Hopper says.

“Jim!”

“Why did you bring him here?” Mike asks, gently patting Isadora on her back.

“I thought that if he came, you two could make amends,” Joyce explains and everyone goes silent. “Did I do it bad?”

“No, no. I’m actually… glad you brought him back,” Max sadly smirks.

“So… should we continue on?” El asks.

“Yeah,” Max mumbles.

It was getting late and Isadora was getting fussy. They had finished off the cake, opened the gifts and they all went their separate ways.

Max and El get home, putting Isadora to bed. Max looks at Billy’s gift. She hasn’t opened it. On the little note card tied to the handle is Billy’s phone number and his hotel name. She needs to find him.

“El, I’m gonna go out for a bit. You good on watching Izzy?”

“Where you going?” El asks.

“Just… out,” Max says simply.

Max leaves the apartment with the gift Billy gave her. As she gets in her car, she feels an overwhelming urge to call her mother-in-law. But she has to do this on her own, it’s her stepbrother.

Max made it to the hotel. She couldn’t believe she was doing this. After what happened in their past, she’s not sure if she can do it. But Max feels like if she does this, she can move forward.

As Max walks up to his hotel room, which she got from the receptionist up front, she feels her heart beating so fast, it could pop out of her chest. Max is holding onto his gift. She knocks on the door and waits for Billy to come out. He does.

“Max? What’re you doing here?” Billy asks.

Max doesn’t know what to say. Everything she had rehearsed couldn’t come out. What did however was sobbing. Tears were streaming down her face. She can’t remember a time where she was this vulnerable around Billy.

“I’m sorry!” She wails, hugging her stepbrother tightly.

“Whoa, what are you sorry for?”

“I ruined your life! You were right, it’s my fault! It’s my fault we moved away! I’m sorry!” Max sobs, dampening his shirt. “It’s my fault Mom and Neil don’t love me anymore!”

“Oh, shh… it’s okay,” Billy says, lightly stroking her back. “You did nothing wrong.”

“Billy… I’m so sorry.”

“No, I’m the one who’s sorry. I’m the one who abused you. I’m the one who took out my anger on you. I’m sorry.”

Wow. Billy has changed. Max just can’t believe it.

“You said that Susan and Dad didn’t love you. What do you mean?” Billy asks. The waterworks start again.

“I… haven’t talked to them since last February,” Max weeps. Billy’s heart breaks.

“What?” Billy angrily says, trying not to scare Max.

“They’ve been really standoffish when I started dating El. When I told them I was pregnant, they stopped talking to me.”

Billy was pissed. After he left for college, he regretted not taking Max. He got help for everything he did, but he didn’t want to hurt his stepsister again. Billy thought that coming to Isadora’s party would help fix things (Joyce’s words, not his). Maybe he made a mistake. But he couldn’t leave Max alone like this.

“Fuck them, Max. You don’t need them. You have Mike, Will, Lucas, Dustin, the Hoppers, the Wheelers,” Billy lists, “Isadora, El. And me.”

Max felt strange after he said that.

“Huh?”

“You have me. I know you may not forgive me after what happened back then, but no matter what, I’m here for you,” Billy says.

“I… don’t know what to say,” She really didn’t.

“C’mon, dry those tears,” Billy wipes a stray tear away. “Come inside, it’s freezing out here.”

She decides that he’s right. All she’s wearing is the sundress she wore

earlier and it's pretty cold out.

Max goes into his room, which warms her up almost instantly.

"You brought the present," Billy notices. "Have you opened it yet?"

"No… I didn't," Max replies.

"Go ahead. Open it."

Max takes out the pink and white tissue paper out of the bag. Joyce might've told him about Isadora's color scheme.

What was inside, she thought she lost it years ago.

"My baby blanket. I thought…"

The blanket was like some of Isadora's small blankets. It was a light green in color, and it had a knitted texture. Max had lost it. Or so she thought.

"I found it in one of my boxes when I went to college. I kept it after all that time," Billy smiles. "Didn't know your address, so when Mrs. Hopper called me, I had to come."

“Billy… thank you. Thank you so much,” Max says, hugging Billy again. When she lets go, she takes the blanket to her nose, taking in the scent of it. It still smelled like the old house back in Hawkins.

“You’re welcome,” Billy says. “So, tell me all of the things after I left.”

“Well, if I had to start…”

Max tells him all about what happened in the last twelve years. A reunion well made.

Author's Note:

> Holy shit! This is a little bit of redemption from the last "Family Life" fic. Hope you enjoyed!
>
> Love, Abbey Elizabeth.